

NORTH CAROLINA SENIOR TAR HEEL LEGISLATURE 2009 FACT SHEET

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH MIXING YOUNGER ADULTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND FRAIL OLDER PERSONS IN LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES

The Senior Tar Heel Legislature recommends implementing practical and cost-effective steps to address concerns related to the mixing of populations, including younger adults with mental illness and frail older persons residing in long term care facilities. These steps would include specialized health training for facility personnel.

Approximately 40% of persons residing in adult care homes have a diagnosis of mental illness. As a consequence of the recent focus on mental health reform, deinstitutionalization, and the placement of persons with mental illness in the least restrictive environment, many young persons have been placed in adult care homes that also care for frail, elderly adults. This mixing of populations in long-term care facilities causes many problems.

The Department of Health and Human Services produced reports in both 2005 and 2008 that addressed problems related to mixing persons with mental illness and the frail elderly in long term care facilities, particularly adult care homes and family care homes. Both reports presented recommendations to members of the General Assembly. The General Assembly, during its short session in 2008, appropriated funds to address two of these issues. They are as follows:

The 2008-2009 State Budget states that the “Department of Health and Human Services shall review State-County Special Assistance rates to develop an appropriate rate for special care units for persons with a mental health disability, including individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and shall review current rules pertaining to special care units for persons with a mental health disability to determine if additional standards are necessary.”

The Joint Conference Committee Report on the Continuation, Expansion and Capital Budget, signed into law on July 3, 2008, appropriated \$1,905,648 in non-recurring funds and \$198,846 in recurring funds to implement a mental health screening program for residents of adult care homes. Non-recurring funds will allow for 7,800 evaluations in FY 2008-09; recurring funds will provide approximately 850 evaluations per year in future years.

However, these are only two of the steps recommended in the reports submitted by the Department of Health and Human Services. The 2008 report also recommended:

- “Expand required minimum training levels for adult care home staff.”
- “Expand capacity to provide local mental health rehabilitative services to individuals with mental illness residing in adult care homes who need these services.”
- “Implement a project to pilot a new service definition for a Transitional Residential Treatment Program to provide 24-hour residential treatment and rehabilitation of adults who have a pattern of difficult behaviors related to mental illness. The service would exceed the capabilities of traditional community residential settings (recommendations also submitted to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on MH/DD/SAS on October 25, 2007 by the Department).”